

independent voice willing to pursue bipartisan progress. That is a voice that is needed now more than ever. I will miss working with my friend here in the Senate, and Marcelle and I wish JEFF and Cheryl all the best as they begin a new chapter.

TRIBUTE TO JOE DONNELLY

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I would like to take a moment to recognize the career and service of Senator JOE DONNELLY. Senator DONNELLY has spent more than a decade steadfastly representing the State of Indiana in both Chambers of Congress. He has resisted labels and rigid partisanship, consistently proving that he is open to any policy solutions that benefit Hoosiers.

I have been particularly moved by Senator DONNELLY's commitment to defending fairness in the workplace. He has fought for sustainable minimum wages and helped pass crucial protections for victims of pay discrimination. His work in Congress has made the workplaces of Indiana and the Nation fairer.

I was proud to work with Senator DONNELLY in 2015 to expand the resources available to victims under the Violence Against Women Act. We have also worked together to pass legislation to ensure that law enforcement have access to funds to purchase adequate body armor.

Senator DONNELLY's presence and his desire to bridge partisan divides will surely be missed in this Chamber. I know he will continue to do all he can to serve Hoosiers and our Nation, and I wish him and his wife, Jill, all the best.

TRIBUTE TO HEIDI HEITKAMP

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, you wouldn't guess it, but North Dakota and Vermont are more alike than they are different. Both depend on agriculture and small businesses to support rural communities. Likewise, Senator HEITKAMP and I are not all that different: We are both natives of our States, and we both are committed to working across the aisle to get things done.

Before running for the Senate, Senator HEITKAMP served as North Dakota's attorney general, where she worked to keep communities safe, much as I did as State's attorney in Vermont before I first ran for the Senate. One of her biggest achievements as State attorney general was forcing the tobacco industry to tell the public the truth about the health risks of smoking, and securing a settlement of \$336 million in damages for North Dakota taxpayers.

Senator HEITKAMP was a strong cosponsor of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013. We worked together closely to include provisions to protect Native American victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, and sexual assault. These protections were sorely needed, and it was an

honor to fight with her for their inclusion. She also introduced and helped usher into law the Alyce Spotted Bear and Walter Soboleff Commission on Native Children Act, which works to ensure that Native children and families have access to critical economic and educational resources.

North Dakota, like Vermont, struggles with affordable housing and a rural housing shortage. As a member of the Senate Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs, Senator HEITKAMP worked to help families achieve stable housing. She sought housing finance reform and relief for community banks and credit unions, giving more rural families access to the economic tools they need to thrive.

Senator HEITKAMP and I have served together on the Senate Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry, working most recently to pass a comprehensive and bipartisan farm bill to support the hard work of our farmers, who are the backbone of our rural communities, and to address nutrition and food insecurity challenges across the country and abroad. Senator HEITKAMP has been committed to ensuring we invest in our rural infrastructure and business development, and North Dakota is stronger for that.

Senator HEIDI HEITKAMP has been a tireless champion for the people of North Dakota for longer than just her term in the Senate, and although I will miss her, I know she will continue to serve her State in other ways for years to come. Marcelle and I wish her and Darwin the very best.

SYRIA

Ms. KLOBUCHAR. Mr. President, I rise today in response to the President's announcement on the withdrawal of troops from Syria.

Like many of my colleagues from both sides of the aisle, I am deeply concerned that prematurely withdrawing American troops from Syria is contrary to the advice of senior national security officials and that the President's announcement will have negative consequences for our country's national security interests. I am also concerned about the implications of U.S. withdrawal for the security of our allies and for innocent civilians in Syria.

Since August of this year, the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, and National Security Advisor have all suggested that the Syrian conflict requires sustained U.S. commitment. Just last week, the administration's Special Presidential Envoy for the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS said that "we can't just pick up and leave" Syria. This week, the U.S. Special Representative for Syria Engagement said that the U.S. would remain in Syria until the U.S. achieves three objectives: ensuring the defeat of the Islamic State, reducing Iranian influence, and reaching a political solution to resolve the crisis. The President's announcement contradicts the advice

of our diplomats and military leaders and fails to address these issues.

These concerns are shared by our key allies, including Israel and Jordan. The withdrawal of U.S. troops will also abandon the Kurds, who have been our partners in the region. Once again, we see the U.S. abandoning critical alliances in favor of narrow and ill-defined aims.

I have seen firsthand the devastating effects of the ongoing Syrian conflict and resulting humanitarian crisis, which has led to the worst refugee crisis since World War II. In 2015, I visited a Greek refugee center and met with officials who are dealing with the crisis. I saw groups of children who had traveled alone to try to find better lives, but when we tried to ask one little boy about his story, he did not want to tell us because he and all his friends were afraid that they would be sent back home. I also visited the Za'atari refugee camp in Jordan, where we heard about atrocities taking place in Syria that one refugee said would "make stones cry."

This crisis is not over, and it requires an international response and clear U.S. policy. There are no easy solutions in Syria. But what we need is leadership and a comprehensive plan based on the expertise of those on the frontlines, not hasty and ill-informed decision-making.

Thank you.

REMEMBERING GEORGE H.W. BUSH

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, today I wish to pay tribute to former President George Herbert Walker Bush who died on November 30 at the age of 94. Henry Clay once said, "Recognize at all times the paramount right of your Country to your most devoted services, whether she treat you ill or well, and never let selfish views or interests predominate over the duties of patriotism." Beginning at the age of 18 when he joined the Navy and served in World War II, President Bush's life was a life of service and of a greater commitment to his country. Over several decades and in numerous roles, President Bush served with honor and decency offering his country the best of his wisdom, experience, and dedication. When he lost reelection in 1992, he left a note to his successor that ended with "Your success is now our country's success. I'm rooting hard for you. Good luck." Even in defeat, President Bush's focus was on the future of the country and its success.

While many commentators have highlighted his achievements in foreign policy, we should remember as well his domestic policy accomplishments, such as the Americans with Disabilities Act. George Bush was a great supporter of people with disabilities even before he became President. As Vice President to Ronald Reagan, he met with disability advocates Evan Kemp and Justin Dart, forming both a policy partnership and friendship with

them. Both Kemp and Dart were wheelchair users and were able to convince the then-Vice President of the need for a civil rights bill for Americans with disabilities.

When he became President, Bush tapped two key legal advisers, his White House Counsel Boyden Gray and distinguished former Pennsylvania Governor Attorney General Richard L. Thornburg, to work with Congress to craft legislation that would be the civil rights law for people with disabilities. Working closely with House leaders Tony Coelho, STENY HOYER, and Steve Bartlett and Senate leaders Tom Harkin, Ted Kennedy, Bob Dole, and ORRIN HATCH, they crafted a bill that was introduced in the spring of 1989 but failed to pass.

The following year, with President Bush himself and his White House staff working with the congressional leaders and advocates, the Americans with Disabilities Act passed the House and the Senate with overwhelming bipartisan support. The signing ceremony was held on the South Lawn of the White House with hundreds of disability advocates in attendance. As President Bush signed the bill into law, he said, "Let the shameful wall of exclusion finally come tumbling down," and with the stroke of a pen that represented years of advocacy and political compromise, President Bush signed the last great civil rights law of the 20th century.

The world is emptier without President Bush, but his legacy lives on in those who knew and worked with him and in the millions of people whose lives were made better by his policies and his service. They are his "thousands of points of light," and they carry forth his vision and his commitment every day.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY OVERSIGHT SUMMARY

Mr. GRASSLEY. Mr. President, oversight is one of the most important responsibilities of this legislative branch. The Constitution requires it.

Without oversight, the Members of this body cannot legislate in the best interests of their constituents, nor can they ensure the government is accountable to the taxpayers.

In whatever capacity I have served my own fellow citizens of Iowa over the years, I have always strived to faithfully carry out my duty to conduct oversight.

The same is true of these last 4 years that I have been honored to serve as the chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

The agencies under the committee's jurisdiction are some of the most powerful and most consequential in the executive branch.

Our Nation's law enforcement agencies have the authority to seek to search and seize our property and review our communications.

When warranted, they may bring charges that can result in

disgorgement of financial resources or loss of personal liberty.

That is because these agencies have the equally weighty responsibility to protect us from criminal and intelligence threats of all stripes.

These agencies help protect the taxpayer from fraud, hunt down violent offenders and fugitives, protect our senior leaders and judges, and dismantle illicit networks that traffic in illegal drugs, endangered wildlife, and worst of all, human beings.

They safeguard our borders, secure our transportation and cyber networks, and return kidnapped children to their families.

That is just a fraction of the many responsibilities of the Departments of Justice and Homeland Security.

I am grateful for the faithful public service of thousands of law enforcement agents, analysts, lawyers, engineers, scientists, officers, managers, and other employees who make up these agencies.

That includes especially those individuals who have not only done their jobs, but have truly gone above and beyond.

A lot of times, they don't like being called whistleblowers because they never meant to be whistleblowers.

But these employees, hundreds of them in the last 4 years, have courageously raised their hands and disclosed waste, fraud, abuse, mismanagement, and all sorts of misconduct.

I could not have fulfilled my oversight responsibilities without them.

Because of whistleblowers, the committee uncovered a pattern of wasteful spending at the U.S. Marshals Service.

Turns out, the Marshals Service spent \$22,000 on a conference table for the Asset Forfeiture Division's headquarters in Arlington, VA, and \$50,000 a month on a lavishly furnished training facility in Houston, TX, that was used for only a few weeks out of the year.

Thanks to the whistleblowers and the work done by this Committee, I am happy to report that the Marshals Service closed that facility earlier this year.

Whistleblowers have also highlighted examples of gross mismanagement within the agency.

For example, we know that, last year, roughly 2,000 deputy marshals were using expired or soon to be expired body armor. We also uncovered instances of unfair hiring practices and other serious ethical violations.

In total, over 100 whistleblowers from the U.S. Marshals Service courageously came forward. I thank them for their bravery and commitment to government transparency.

After supervisors ignored their warnings, whistleblowers at the Department of Homeland Security came forward to raise awareness on how smugglers prey on unaccompanied minors and migrants.

A courageous whistleblower told my office that Health and Human Services were not conducting thorough back-

ground checks on sponsors before they took custody of the children.

Now, all sponsors and those living with sponsors, are fingerprinted before they can bring a child home. This whistleblower also reported a dangerous tactic used by smugglers to pair kids with unrelated adults to create the appearance of family units.

Smugglers would use kids like pawns in an effort to help adults avoid detention when coming across our border. Now, U.S. Government officials are working with their counterparts in Mexico to investigate and crack down on the smuggling that occurs on the lengthy journey to the United States.

Whistleblowers also contacted my office during the Obama administration about criminals who should be ineligible for DACA, but due to an oversight by the Department, were still receiving benefits, like work authorization. Scrutiny of the program led to more thorough recurrent vetting by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Thanks to more than 10 whistleblowers at the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms who courageously reported that their sexual harassment claims were being buried internally, then-Attorney General Lynch updated the sexual harassment policy and a problematic official in internal affairs was replaced.

The GAO is currently assessing how reports of abuse are reviewed and adjudicated at ATF.

I have also had the pleasure of working with a number of whistleblowers at the Department of Veterans Affairs who have had the courage to stand up and do what is right.

Most recently, my office worked with Brandon Coleman after he was put on administrative leave for more than a year and kept from running an addiction treatment program for veterans.

Brandon's only "mistake" was to point out poor treatment of suicidal veterans.

Eventually, after a concerted effort by my office, Senator JOHNSON, and the Office of Special Counsel, Brandon was provided a new position within the VA's Office of Accountability and Whistleblower Protection. That is how it should be done.

Although the False Claims Act isn't new, I want to point out that is still working hard for the taxpayers.

Because of the 1986 amendments to the act and all of our efforts to strengthen it, whistleblowers were empowered to help the government fight fraud.

In the last 4 years, thanks largely to whistleblowers, the government has recovered \$17 billion under the False Claims Act.

That makes \$56 billion since the 1986 amendments.

These are only a few examples of what has been achieved because of whistleblowers. They have saved our money, made us safer, and held our government accountable.

Our oversight efforts have also helped us write better laws.